



NEWS RELEASE

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Utah's Youth Can Become "Defenders of Truth" by Entering Anti-Tobacco Advertising Contest

(Salt Lake City, UT) – You don't need superpowers to fight big tobacco. That is the message that the Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) Phoenix Alliance youth advocate group is sending this week. The UDOH's Phoenix Alliance will launch the sixth annual Truth From Youth Anti-tobacco Advertising Contest and urges ordinary kids to rebel against the tobacco industry by entering.

"One of the best ways to counter the tobacco industry's advertising dollars is to get your own message out there," says Chrissy Upton, a Phoenix Alliance youth leader. "Create your own radio, TV or billboard ad and show big tobacco we're not buying what they're selling."

This year's theme "Defenders of Truth" is carried out on the contest poster, which shows a teen demonstrating his "advertising superpowers" to battle the "Tobacco Toxicator." "We're excited about the look and theme and how it plays into the current underground comic book look-and-feel to that's hot right now," says Bre deBry, of the UDOH's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

The contest is a curriculum tool well used by many Utah teachers. Last year's contest yielded 8,000 entries from students statewide. "I have used the Anti-Tobacco Advertising Contest as a part of my curriculum for five or six years," says Jill Bridges, a teacher at Northridge High School in Layton. "It is a relevant experience for the kids in my classes. I teach Marketing, so we have a lot of discussion concerning what influences the media has on the youth. The contest is a very powerful teaching tool and project motivator."

The UDOH recently distributed thousands of contest information packets and posters this month to every teacher in the state. Phoenix Alliance members statewide will make anti-tobacco presentations to schools and youth groups to encourage contest participation.

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A tongue-in-cheek ad campaign was also launched in support of the contest. The TV ad is a deadpan spoof on superhero movies and the radio ad is a humorous look at an "average" teen who also happens to posses superpowers.

Utah youth ages 5 to 18 may enter the contest by creating anti-tobacco radio, TV or billboard ads. Entries are grouped in elementary, junior and senior high school categories with cash prizes of \$300 for first place, \$200 for second and \$100 for third. Contest deadline is March 21, 2003. Best of contest winners will receive \$400 and have the opportunity to help produce their ads, which will be shown in May 2003.

"They may claim otherwise, but the tobacco industry continues to target youth," says Chris Keate, Phoenix Alliance member. "They sponsor concerts and extreme sporting events. They distribute free merchandise with weak anti-tobacco messages that actually promote use and advertise tobacco name brands."

"Tobacco companies place ads in magazines that appeal to teens and point-of-purchase signs in convenience stores where lots of youth will be sure to see them," says Upton. "While television ads are no longer allowed, movies are still a showcase for tobacco. Celebrities light up and brand names are clearly visible. Big Tobacco spends \$8.24 billion per year nationally on advertising and marketing. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids estimates that \$65 million in advertising is spent on marketing yearly in Utah."

"Defend the truth. Enter the contest," says Keate. "It's a great way to fight back against this media manipulation." For more information about the contest or the Phoenix Alliance call 1-801-256-4924 or visit the web site at www.youthagainsttobacco.com.

Editorial Note: Copies of the contest materials and corresponding comic book art are available by calling Rhonda Greenwood at 801-531-0533. Copies of last year's contest winners' entries are also available.

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